MARKED COPY

THE Reconstructionist

Volume XI. March 23, 1945 Nisan 9, 5705 No. 3

EDITORIALS
- *Liberation and Redemption*
- *The Basis of Our Hope*
- *The Yiddish Press Celebrates*
- *Outlawing Discrimination in Employment*

"SHEVET AHIM"—A Religious Experience
By Bertram A. Rosenberg

VINDICATION OF DEMOCRACY—A Reply to Dr. Agus
By Eugene Kohn

A FEW THOUGHTS ON SUMMER CAMPS
By Samuel Grand

REALITIES AND VALUES

CORRESPONDENCE

Dedicated to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization, to the upbuilding of Israel's ancient homeland, and to the furtherance of universal freedom, justice and peace.

the Reconstructionist

is published bi-weekly for twenty consecutive issues, starting in October, by the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, Inc., 15 West 86th Street, New York 24, N. Y. Subscription $2.00 per year; 10c per copy; foreign 25c extra; membership in the Foundation, $5.00 per year, including subscription to *The Reconstructionist*. Reentered as second class matter October 3, 1935, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Chairman: Mordecai M. Kaplan
Associate Chairman: Ira Eisenstein
Managing Editor: Eugene Kohn

Associate Editors: Israel S. Chipkin, Samuel Dinin, Judith K. Eisenstein, Theodore Friedman, Theodore H. Gaster, Jacob S. Golub, Bernard Heller, Philip Houtz, Samuel C. Kohs, Milton R. Konvitz, Myer S. Kripke, Milton Steinberg, Max Wiener.

Contributing Editors: Michael Alper, Nathan A. Barack, Shlomo Bardin, Morton M. Berman, Philip S. Bernstein, Asher Block, Samuel M. Blumenfield, Ben-Zion Bokser, William J. Boxerman, Mortimer J. Cohen, Miriam R. Ephraim, Harry Essrig, Emanuel Gamoran, Judah I. Goldin, Solomon Goldman, Robert Gordis, Emanuel Green, Max Kadushin, Louis M. Levitsky, Theodore N. Lewis, Joshua Loth Liebman, I. D. Minzberg, Edward T. Sandrow, Simon Shetzer, Joshua Trachtenberg, Leo Trepp, Jacob J. Weinstein.

Secretary: Hannah L. Goldberg

THE NEW HAGGADAH

Edited by MORDECAI M. KAPLAN, EUGENE KOHN *and* IRA EISENSTEIN

Nothing has matched the astonishing success of the NEW HAGGADAH.

FIRST PRINTING—2,000 COPIES SHORT!

SECOND PRINTING—4,000 COPIES SHORT!

This year's new large printing—1,800 copies sold before publication. Because of paper rationing, only a limited number is now available. We suggest therefore that you send for your copies immediately. The NEW HAGGADAHS will be shipped to you promptly while they last!

Why is The New Haggadah so popular?

BECAUSE: *We find it beautiful and traditional, yet as modern as tomorrow's news broadcast!*

Children understand it and love it!

Soldiers find in it a language that speaks directly to them!

- 35 pages of tuneful Seder melodies with music.
- 75 charming illustrations.

Only 75c per copy

BEHRMAN HOUSE, PUBLISHERS

1261 BROADWAY AT 31ST STREET · NEW YORK 1, N.Y.

THE
Reconstructionist

Volume XI. March 23, 1945 Nisan 9, 5705 No. 3

EDITORIALS

LIBERATION AND REDEMPTION

THE eternal relevance of the festival of Pesah will be brought home this year with unusual force to every thinking Jew. The Pharaoh whose hardened heart condemned millions of our people to death and caused the death, through acts of war and oppression, of many millions more of all races and faiths now faces the day of final reckoning. The floods of invasion are inundating his land like the waters of the Red Sea, and he and his hosts will be drowned beneath them.

Since last we observed Pesah, nation after nation has been liberated from the bondage imposed on them by the *Herrenvolk*. The liberation of the Jewish people, through the rehabilitation of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth, is, to be sure, still in the realm of hope rather than of reality. But the resurgence of the spirit of liberty in mankind and the defeat of the "dominion of arrogance" strengthen our faith that Israel too will be remembered in the great deliverance. The Jewish people cannot fail to be included when the modern Pharaoh will yield to the divine command, "Let my people go!"

It will not be a gay Passover this year. Too many seats will be vacant at the *seder* table. But at *sedarim* in strange, faraway places, many of those whom we will miss at home will be sending loving, longing thoughts homeward, as they participate in the familiar rites. The *maror* of their nostalgia and loneliness — for one can be lonely even in a crowd, when separated from those one loves — will be sweetened with the *haroset* of hope, of the hope that, in the next year, they will be observing the *seder* reunited with their dear ones in peace, security and freedom.

But alas! some vacant places will never be filled. Casualties have been mounting. (What tragic irony there is in the casualness with which the word *casualty* is pronounced or written! — as though human lives could be expressed in numerical sums, as though "to destroy a single human being" were not like "destroying a whole world.") The souls of dear ones who fell in the struggle for freedom will claim their share this year in our observance of Pesah. They will not haunt the *seder* to heap reproaches upon us; they knew that freedom could only be purchased at a cost of sacrifice and they were prepared to make the *supreme* sacrifice, if necessary. But they will plead with us to keep faith with them, to bring to a victorious conclusion this war of libera-

tion, to terminate it with a peace of redemption.

For redemption is more than liberation. It is liberation plus awareness of what it is that enslaves men and the determination to eradicate the seeds of slavery implanted in the hearts and minds of men — their prejudices, their lust for domination, their disposition to shrink from responsibility and take refuge in the anonymity of mobs while committing inhuman acts, their desire, also, to play safe and be left alone, to turn a deaf ear to the cries of the oppressed, to abide by the flesh-pots while others starve. Redemption is liberation plus the purpose to dedicate freedom to the enhancement of human life, the improvement of human society, the advancement of truth, beauty and love in the world. It is liberation conceived in the spirit of our Jewish tradition. "For the Israelites are servants to Me; they are My servants." This, to the Rabbis, meant that men must not be made "servants to servants," must not be diverted from their duty of loyal obedience to truth and right, the law of God, in order to conform to the arbitrary dictates of any mere human authority.

Will the forthcoming San Francisco Conference be the *at-halta digeullah,* the beginning of the redemption, for all who have suffered under the Axis Pharaohs? Such is the hope and the prayer of every Jew on this Pesah. And it is good to know that, all over the world, men of different nations, races and creeds join us today in that hope and prayer. While armies of the United Nations are sweeping on in their campaigns of liberation, the conference at San Francisco will address itself to the task of redemption. Even before the war is over, it will be laying the foundation of peace. May it succeed in establishing the beginnings of a world-order from which the weeds of fascism shall be uprooted, and in which the growths of industry, science, art and religion shall flourish, for the well-being of all men and the glory of God.

THE BASIS OF OUR HOPE

THE Yalta conference is over, and the San Francisco conference has been called. In this short interval between two historic meetings, Jewish hopes and fears are strangely mingled. The fears derive from several sources: President Roosevelt met with Ibn Saud, and on his return remarked that he had learned more in five minutes than he could have learned from dozens of letters; Churchill reported in the House of Commons that the question of Palestine would be settled *after the* war to everyone's satisfaction; the Arab states have met and have formed a federation; nothing was said about Palestine in the formal statement issued after Yalta.

Whence do Jews derive their hope? To be sure, Jews have never depended upon specific situations or events for reason to hope. Hope has been so integral a part of their psychology and their way of life that it has always been difficult, if not impossible, to trace its source. Today, however, there are undoubtedly many Jews in whom fears outweigh their optimism. It is, therefore, important, at this juncture in world and Jewish history, to fortify that hope which springs spontaneously in the Jewish breast, by bringing to the surface of our consciousness those circumstances which confirm the faith.

Let us therefore point to the most significant fact about the present crisis: Palestine has once again been placed upon the international agenda. The fate of the Jewish people and its national aspirations have again become the business of the whole world. This is good, for the Jews know, from a long and tragic history, that whenever the entire civilized world has been faced with the Jewish "problem," they have fared far better than

when they have had to deal individually with this or that power, state or ruler.

This was the whole purpose of Herzl's career, to place the problem of Jewry on an international level, to make it the business of mankind. He may have failed in many things, but in this he succeeded gloriously. Later, the Balfour Declaration marked a milestone in the career of Palestine and the Jewish people; but an even greater milestone was the assignment of the mandate to Great Britain by the League of Nations. For in the latter instance, the League represented the conscience of civilization, and Great Britain became only a trustee of the League. During the years of the League's operation, the Jewish people had no better friend than the Mandates Commission. The Mandates Commission, it must be recalled, never gave its approval to the iniquitous White Paper. Unfortunately, the League lost its prestige, its power and its effectiveness. Then Great Britain was able to treat Palestine like any ordinary colony. Similarly, the "guaranteed" rights of Jewish minorities in the European nations were flagrantly violated, with impunity, when the League was no longer able to back up the integrity of the minority clauses in its treaties.

Today, the world seems to have risen again to a consciousness of itself as *one world*. As never before, men are aware of themselves as belonging to an indivisible mankind. If world consciousness is the prerequisite to world conscience, conscience cannot be far behind. Palestine, according to Churchill himself, will be the responsibility of the Allied Nations. Therein lies our greatest hope.

Nevertheless, Jews must not substitute hope for action. Life without hope will die; but with hope alone it cannot live for long. The pressure upon Palestine grows daily. The problem of the liberated Jews cries for solution. It is therefore essential that Jews voice new and militant appeals, encouraged by their hope, appeals that Palestine be put upon the agenda *now*, and not later, in San Francisco and not at some future conference, now when the Arab federation is just beginning to form and not later when the Near East is faced with *faits accomplis*.

The President should be asked to explain himself fully: just exactly what did he mean by saying that Ibn Saud had taught him so much? Did he learn nothing from years of association with Zionist leaders? Does the fact that all these Arab states waited until they got a personal invitation to declare war upon Germany teach him nothing? Does the all-out war effort, by the Jewish *yishuv*, convey nothing to our President? Was his personal pledge last fall to the Zionist convention based upon little or no knowledge?

The American Zionist Emergency Council and the American Jewish Conference are endeavoring to bring the Jewish case before the bar of world public opinion at the San Francisco Conference. A united representation of the American Jewish Conference, the British Board of Jewish Deputies and the World Jewish Congress will urge the claims of the Jewish Commonwealth and the other demands of our people. Their efforts should have the backing of all loyal Jews.

Now that world consciousness, and its by-product, world conscience, are awake again, Jews should raise a vast cry to them, confident that the Soul of the Universe, which courses through the soul of mankind, will not permit that cry to go unheeded.

THE YIDDISH PRESS CELEBRATES

THE current celebration of the 75th anniversary of the issuance of the first Yiddish newspaper in America serves to focus attention on the notable role the Yiddish press has

played in the American Jewish community. Unlike so many other aspects of Jewish life imported from abroad, it has not, through the years, lost its individuality in a pell-mell rush to imitate its American counterpart. In its effort to serve the needs of its readers, drawn almost exclusively from the ranks of first generation East European immigrants, the Yiddish newspaper has retained a character all its own.

From its very inception, the Yiddish press was more than simply an instrument for the reporting of news. Its emphasis was interpretation. The history of American social and political institutions and the issues thrust forth by the contemporary American scene found ample discussion and analysis in the Yiddish press. It thus served the East-European Jewish immigrants as an indispensable guide to the often bewildering currents and cross-currents of life in the new world. As the language of its adopted land lost its unfamiliarity, the Americanizing function of the Yiddish press receded into the background.

It is instructive to note, in this connection, that certain aspects of American life which claim headline attention in the general press, receive but scant notice in the Yiddish dailies. From a perusal of the Yiddish press, one would hardly suspect, for example, that baseball and kindred sports occupied much of the attention and interest of the American people. Scandal - mongering in all its varieties, a growing feature of the American press, is rarely to be found in the columns of the Yiddish Daily. In these and related matters, the Yiddish press has fortunately adhered to its own standards of good taste and judgment.

With the stoppage of immigration and the rapid integration of the recent arrival into American life, the chief role of the Yiddish press centered around that area in which it is still indispensable—the area of Jewish life. Here, too, actual Jewish news occupies little space compared to the historical, interpretive and polemical articles carried in practically every issue. In this field, it has been a cultural instrument of no mean potency. Memoirs of contemporary Jewish worthies, historical novels on Jewish themes, biographies, literary criticism, Zionism in all its aspects, current Jewish issues, interpretation of the weekly *sidra* — all this and more has been grist for the Yiddish journalistic mill. Some of the best works of the outstanding Yiddish novelists and poets appeared originally in Yiddish dailies. Popular presentations of Jewish historical studies are still to be found in the Yiddish newspaper. Perhaps its unique character can best be expressed by contrasting the average American newspaperman with this Yiddish confrère. The former is essentially the reporter bent on high speed news coverage, who prays for the scoop of a life-time; the latter is a man of letters.

The importance of the Yiddish press in helping to create an enlightened and informed Jewish public opinion suggests the need for its equivalent for that larger group in American Jewry who do not read Yiddish.

To date, the Anglo-Jewish press, with one or two saving exceptions, has shown slight promise in this direction. If it is to become the legitimate heir of the Yiddish press, its standards must be raised. It can do no better than to study the type of reading matter to be found in the Yiddish press. Like the latter, it must be more than a medium for the dissemination of Jewish news. It must become a Jewish cultural force and bring to its readers the Jewish story, essay and poem, written by the gifted informed writer. That goal will not be easy of achievement. The Yiddish press has behind it generations of Jewish cultural tradition. Most Jewish journalists who use English

as their medium of expression are relatively illiterate in respect to Jewish culture. Measures will have to be taken to create opportunities for those who wish to engage professionally in Jewish journalism in America to acquire the necessary cultural background. Only then will the Anglo-Jewish press be qualified to voice and to guide Jewish public opinion on all vital issues in which the interests of Jewry are involved.

OUTLAWING DISCRIMINATION N EMPLOYMENT

ON February 28th the New York Assembly passed the Ives-Quinn Law against Discrimination by a vote of 109-32; on March 5th the Senate passed the bill by a vote of 49-6; and it has since been signed by Governor Dewey. By this action the State of New York has set the pattern for other progressive states to take effective steps to outlaw discrimination in employment.

We had occasion previously to comment favorably on the bill tentatively offered as a basis for discussion by the New York State Temporary Commission against Discrimination (see editorial in *The Reconstructionist,* Vol. X, No. 16). As a result of the hearings held by the Commission, the Ives-Quinn bill was offered; and this bill, without amendment, is the Law against Discrimination.

The act is directed against discrimination in employment because of race, creed, color or national origin (ancestry). It makes opportunity of employment without discrimination a civil right; and *by declaring it a civil right, it makes such opportunity a constitutional right,* within the meaning of Section II of Article I of the State Constitution.

A commission with five members is to be created by the Governor and the Senate; each commissioner is to serve for a five-year term and receive an annual salary of $10,000. Among other duties the commission is obliged to create advisory agencies and conciliation councils throughout the state, "to foster through community effort or otherwise, good-will, cooperation, and conciliation among the groups and elements of the population."

The act prohibits employers from discriminating in employing, or in compensation or in conditions of employment; it bars discrimination by labor organizations; it prohibits employment agencies from using language which differentiates among applicants on the basis of color, creed, or ancestry. Violation of the law is a misdemeanor, punishable by fine of $500 or imprisonment for one year, or both.

The law requires the commission to resort to conciliation and other forms of persuasion before a formal complaint is issued. Only if persuasion fails is a formal complaint to be filed, which will be heard by three commissioners. If the finding is against the employer, the commission will issue a "cease and desist" order; it may also make an order requiring the hiring, re-hiring or upgrading of employees with or without pay, or the restoration to membership in a labor union. If there should be a failure to comply, the Supreme Court, on application, will issue a mandate. If the mandate is disobeyed, the respondent may be held in contempt of court.

The law obviously has "teeth" in it; at the same time it is equally obvious that sanctions are not to be resorted to except in cases where the respondent wilfully violates the order of the commission. The law is an instrument of compulsion; but more than that, it is an instrument of education. Mr. Ives himself has declared that the most vital feature of the act is to be found in its educational provisions — the provisions calling for resort to persuasion in conference before a formal complaint is filed. The commission itself is charged with the duty to

conduct these "friendly" conferences. The advisory agencies and conciliation councils, to be established in municipalities and counties, will conduct investigation and research tending to promote good-will and to minimize and eliminate discrimination.

While opponents of the bill claimed that it will be difficult to enforce the law because the motives of employers will need to be scrutinized, thereby opening the door to "nuisance" actions, we feel that this is not a significant obstacle to a proper enforcement of the law. The same argument was made when Workmen's Compensation laws were proposed: how is one going to tell the difference between the malingerer and a person really entitled to compensation? Again, when state and federal Labor Relations acts were proposed, the argument was made; how is one going to tell if the employer is motivated by a spirit of anti-unionism or by legal considerations? Experience has shown, however, that workers, with but rare and unimportant exceptions, have lived up to the responsibility thrust upon them. We have not heard of important cases which have shown that workers used these laws against employers who enjoy a reputation of good faith for honest dealings with their employees. In the case of the Law against Discrimination, too, experience will provide the test; and we anticipate that workers will show proper responsibility and self-discipline, and will not harass employers except in instances where employers have set themselves against the law by a wilful disregard of the rights of workers.

Contrary to the expectations of opponents that the law will sharpen differences, we expect that in the long run the act will achieve the objective of deepening the roots of democracy. We agree with the preamble in the act which states that discrimination in employment "menaces the institution and foundation of a free democratic state." Members of minority groups have long been keenly aware of this truth. Now the people of the State of New York have shown their awareness of this truth by adopting an act which is directed to the supplementation of political democracy by democracy in employment.

Said the rabbis: "Where there is no food, there is no Torah." Today we might well add: Where there is no food (or work), there is no freedom.

REALITIES AND VALUES

THE CHILDREN OF PALESTINE once made a vow: "If I forget thee, O diaspora. . . ." The *yishuv* has taken that vow to heart, and instead of becoming an egocentric group, it seeks out fellow-Jews throughout the world and strives to learn about them and to understand them. *Am Oved,* the publishing house of the Histadrut, the Palestine Labor Federation, is about to issue a Hebrew translation of Oscar Leonard's "Americans All," published recently by Behrman's Jewish Book House, New York. The book is about Jews who made important contributions to the development of America. That Palestinian Jews want to know about these Jews is a healthy and encouraging sign. Mr. Leonard's gift of the royalties to the J.N.F. completes the happy picture.

THE CREATIVE POWER OF THE *yishuv,* and its intellectual vitality, continue to astound and please. Word has come that the first original Hebrew opera has been produced in Tel Aviv. It is called, "Dan, the Watchman," and is based on a novel by S. Shalom, the distinguished poet. The libretto is by Max Brod, the music by Marc Lavery. If the score and text of that opera could be brought here, its performance would make more Zionists than many a speech. We have always believed, and we still believe, that the evidence of creative Jewish living is

the most persuasive argument to those who wonder whether it is worth while remaining Jewish. We hope that "Dan" and others that follow will find their way to our stages.

▼

HUBERT RIPKA, CZECHOSLOVAKIAN Minister of State, announced recently that, in postwar Czechoslovakia, the Jews would no longer be considered a national minority as before the war. The change is not motivated by any desire to curtail the rights of Jews as such. Czechoslovakia was one country which, before its subjugation by Hitler, scrupulously complied with the minority rights clauses of its constitution. Jews had no cause to complain of the treatment accorded to them by the state, nor did the state ever express any dissatisfaction with its Jewish minority. But the Hungarian and German minorities gave plenty of trouble and, with the condonation of the Chamberlain British government, eventually brought the country under the Nazi yoke. It is, therefore, easy to understand the unwillingness of the Czechoslovakian government to continue the system of minority rights. The Jews of Czechoslocakia will henceforth have a status like that of the Jews of the United States. They will enjoy equal political and civil rights with all other citizens, including full religious and cultural freedom. But they will suffer the disadvantages experienced by cultural minorities in perpetuating their way of life without state aid. Let us hope that they will not repeat the mistakes of American Jewry, that they will proceed immediately to organize their Jewish community life o na unified voluntary democratic basis.

▼

REPORTS OF HOW PURIM WAS celebrated by our servicemen abroad include two interesting items. The first of these is interesting because of the place in which the Purim celebration was held—a castle in Germany belonging to none other than the modern Haman's mouthpiece, Joseph Goebbels. The second is interesting because of the form that the celebration took, a Purim party provided by American Jewish servicemen for a thousand Jewish children of Rome. These children, during the past five years, probably for as long as many of them could remember, had lived without any of the joys that are the normal privilege of childhood. It must, therefore, have meant a great deal to them to have been given *mishloah manot* (*shlahmonos* in *mamaloshon*) from the soldiers' rations, to have been entertained with a Purim program by the local Hebrew school, and to have viewed an American comic movie cartoon.

▼

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER OF Palestine, Lord Gort, has recommended the release of the Jews interned in the island of Mauritius and their admission to Palestine. They had previously been deported to the island for the crime of trying to enter their national home despite the illegal and arbitrary edict of the British White Paper. The number of these interned Jews, according to government figures, is about 1,400. Some hundred Jewish internees joined on Mauritius; some joined the Czechoslovakian army; some volunteered for British sapper units; seventy recently joined the Jewish Brigade. The belated "mercy" shown to these "criminals" betokens a troubled conscience. We hope that that conscience will not rest until all the wrongs perpetrated against the Jewish people by British abuse of the Mandate will be redressed.

"Shevet Ahim"—A Religious Experience

By BERTRAM A. ROSENBERG

I HAD heard the story many times before. It had so penetrated my cortex that I will probably transmit it congenitally to my offspring, science to the contrary notwithstanding. I am not belittling nor mocking at the story, rather am I thankful that I am now a part of it, a real sensory part, just as if I were the "I" in the story. And I am.

What My Father Told Me

My father was the teller; my two brothers and I were the listeners. We cannot find out at what early date he decided to confide in us, to consider us mature enough to comprehend it all, at what specific incident in his life, he bent forward his head, and swaying to-and-fro, to-and-fro, ever gently, almost imperceptibly in cyclic vibrations, related this that had happened to him. We now know that his story is the story of a great many Jews who voyaged to America, to a land of "milk and honey," where "diamonds were used for cobblestones," and one "could pick *'kush,'* from the very trees."

My father went through the joys and sorrows of his other life by telling us of it. We, in turn, acquired a richer meaning in our own life; it was almost a double existence, two generations of experiences, two varied colorations of life, two treasures. We were extremely fortunate. For who among you, can claim to have lived through two different centuries? Indeed, who on all the earth has had two-hundred years of life, in two separate worlds? Only the stars and things of the heavens dare claim this.

Perhaps if I tell you a little of it, you too will have added to your life, other riches. Perhaps. . . .

"I was born—that is my father was—in the town of Lomza, Poland. Ahead of me, there were other burdens on my parents, who in prayers to the Holy One, gave thanks for the birth of another child. My father especially devoted that day to prayers, for into the world had come, on Messiah wings, a sayer of Kaddish, a *"ben,"* to follow the commandments of a just and merciful Lord, to study the Torah and become a breadwinner in the household. My life from birth to manhood was devoted to the honoring of the Lord, was dedicated to the Patriarchs, the fathers of Israel. I never recall one moment of childhood, one childish joy, one single childish gesture, that escaped my father's observation and call. My mother's bitter destiny was to carry the burden of this world on her shoulders. But before I could help shoulder those burdens, she passed away. Of a mother I really had none. As I grew older, I was sent to a yeshivah. There I studied, hour after hour without ceasing, until all distinction between morning, noon and evening seemed to have been lost. At times I caught myself wishing that the very floor I stood on, would sink under me, so that all would end. I had my 'eating days,' one day at this man's house, the next day at another's. I didn't have time for making a living; and who expected it of me? In the midst of all my studies, the call came for military duty. In those days for a Jew to serve in the army was a terrible experience; we were the bootblacks. And shouldering a gun, being forced to work on Shabbos, eating non-kosher meat, was against the very nature of our lives. Our father's fathers had committed themsevles to death for less. Therefore we sought to escape this tyrannical despotism. It seemed that every government official had his price. The unification of bribery was splendid. One

day, we smuggled ourselves, in a straw-cart, across the borders of the land. For days we had nothing but bread and water, sometimes only bread, sometimes only water, sometimes . . . neither. At last, one day we found ourselves out of the "land of Egypt."

My Father's World and Mine

This, as I relate to you, is only a microcosm of the many stories of his life in the other world. This was the "World of Sholom Aleichem," and I quote parts of this most eloquent book of the same title, by Maurice Samuel:

". . . This is a sort of pilgrimage among the cities and inhabitants of a world which only yesterday, as history goes, harbored the grandfathers and grandmothers of some millions of American citizens. That world is no more." But I know that it is, for it is a part of my consciousness.

". . . The world of Sholom Aleichem is mostly, not wholly, the internal world of Russian Jewry forty, fifty, sixty and seventy years ago, again mostly — the world of the Jewish Pale of Settlement." "Pale of Settlement" means ghettoization. With this my father's being was impregnated.

". . . Sholom Aleichem is almost unknown to millions of Americans whose grandfathers made up his world. This is not simply a literary loss . . . it is a break —a very recent and disastrous one—in the continuity of a group history." Indeed, this break in "the continuity of a group history," leaves a chasm of misunderstanding between the father and sons of many Jewish-Americans today.

Anyway, back to our article. We, his children, benefited by the addition of European *yiddishkeit* to our Jewish-American life. It was a handing down from father-to-son of a folklore, of a Jewish way of life, remarkably associated with *yeshivah behurim,* and old men with long beards and black yarmulkes, and long gabardine coats. It is a past age, but we were close enough to it to carry it on in our nervous systems. In many ways it set the tone for our own reactions to Jewish living.

The world moves on, and I am getting older. Someday, before many winters, I too will have paternal problems. Besides having to respond to the biological wants of my child, to still the wail of babyhood, to walk the floor at night, and to go through the invariable diapering experience, I will have to begin the handing down from father-to-son, of the Jewish folklore of my age. Surely I shall tell my "quiz-kid" of the history of our people. But if I want him to share my Jewish experiences as I shared my fathers, so that in his cortex will be forever contained a double existence, I will perforce need to describe that which composes Jewish-American life.

Where shall I begin? What are my Jewish-American experiences? Have I, as my father before me, come through a multiplicity of strictly Jewish experiences, or has my life, in its participation in the general life of the American community, been more loosely tied up with that of the Jewish people as a whole? The latter is the fact. Therefore, of what shall I speak? Of the building of a Jewish National Homeland? But I have not actually seen its glories. Of the persecution of my people? But I have not been an ectoplasmic part of this. Of my Jewish buddies who met death in a great war? But here, too, I have to falter. . . . One day, I think, at some moment in his maturing life, I shall decide to tell him my Jewish story. And I think I know what I shall tell.

What I Shall Tell My Son

"My son," I will begin, "your father was one of millions of Americans who were drafted into the Armed Forces of the United States, to give adequate an-

swer to the knives of treachery that were hacking to pieces, the hopes of men striving toward freedom, toward creative living. However, my lot was more difficult than that of most, because, though all of us had the heartache of being far removed from our loved ones, it was harder for me because I was a Jew. I was a Jew who had always worn the Jewish garments in a milieu, of Jewishness. All my perceptions—the very sensitivity of my life-pulsations—were attuned to the sound of *Tekiah.* I always swam in the sea of Talmudism. Suddenly I was snatched out, as if with a net, into a different element, a medium of associations, to which in its totality it was hard to adjust myself. How can I explain it, son? Maybe this comparison will help. Suppose that you, my son, suddenly were to find yourself in surroundings where no one understood your speech, that the world's tongue was foreign to you, that the very lingual foundations of all life were lost to you. . . . Well, that is how I felt.

It wasn't so bad for a while, because my army station was close to home. However, one day, the dreaded orders came. The skyline of New York was no longer visible. It was far behind us. Before us were the flat plains of Kansas, one endless airfield, and the snow-covered peaks of the Rockies. Lost were the physical ties with home. Now only the mind could project a reel of association; now only through daily letters, three-cents stamp family union, would there be any life in a Jewish world. So I thought. Many were the nights I wept. At times, the very life-blood of my being seemed to ooze out through some undetected wound, seemed to drain the desire of continuing.

As you can see, I was not a happy warrior. I was not as brave as Philip Raskin's "The Jewish Soldier." At night, amid the torrent of zoo-like snores, I prayed to Heaven for solace, for the giving of a better, new tomorrow. And before sleep tugged me away, I silently said the *Shema Yisrael* and kissed my *mezuzzah,* thus keeping this covenant with my father, and the commitments with my brothers, and dear friends in the Service.

Oh, yes, there were Jewish boys in camp. I knew of them. As I wrote home in a letter, ". . . Their way of living is not Jewishly inspired. They offer me no kinship. If I try to converse about Jewish freedom, they say that all the Jews' calamities are their own fault. Most of them, I feel, are ashamed of their Jewishness. Some day they'll realize that hiding the fact that they are Jewish will only lead to more pain from persecution, not exemption from their responsibility. I had accepted the responsibility and had also known the great privilege of being Jewish. They only know the hard and bitter end, not the sweet and beautiful part. They are just plain up-to-date assimilationists, the blind who can see but don't want to."

Manna from Heaven

One Sunday, at 9:30 a.m. (an ungodly hour to be awakened), I was aroused by insistent hands. A voice timidly inquired,

"Ah . . . Ah . . . Are you a Jew?"

"Yes," I braved.

"Are you coming to Chapel Services?" the voice whispered.

"Of course, of course, won't you wait for me," I eagerly accepted. Hastily I threw my G.I. shorts out of bed and ran through my dressing with fireman speed.

Would this going to Chapel cure my four-star melancholia, especially aggravated by the fact that the Passover holidays were upon us? *"Avadim hayinu le-Phar'oh b-mitzrayim. . . ."* my father used to begin, and there was the inevitable *"saltz vasser"* with the delicious cucumbers . . . this the Feast of Liberation, of an inevitable reunion of a people with its birthplace. No Red Sea would divide to

open up a pathway to my home. Indeed how could one compare that simple crossing with the acquisition of a leave from army training.

The Chapel was too large. Really it only seemed so because the worshipers were so few. One could count, on the fingers . . . ten . . . a *minyan*—minimum. The services were brief, but satisfying. And did we individualistically murder the singing of *En Kelohenu*? The discord must have spoiled all the angelic radio-sets in Heaven, but surely the good Lord Himself, could overlook the destruction of atomic sound, for the religious exuberance.

Then came the Chaplain's sermon. It was beautifully delivered, and weighty with moral teachings. And for only ten of us. I remember much of it, especially this portion:

". . . So, on this Pesah, the Jewish community in America arises to the occasion and opens its heart, and its homes to you men of war. All of you have, at one time or another, heard men deplore the lack of virility in the Jewish-American Community. They have said that our children are falling away from us, our synagogues are without congregations, our Jewish education is lacking dynamism, the heart of Jewry in America is sadly sick. In a measure, this is so. But that Jewish heart is not stilled. All over America today, Jewish-American communities are rising to the need of their soldier-heroes; all over America today the doors are opening to admit you, men, to see that the observance of Passover is not denied anyone. Never before has American-Jewry understood the true meaning of our holiday, and shared its bread - matzoh with stranger - brethren. This is a good sign. This is a sign of life. By their fruits shall ye know them."

After the services were over, I and the others, entered the Chaplain's office. As I passed the door-mezuzzah, I noticed a blue and white colored tin box on the wall. It bore the name *"Keren Kayemet Le-Yisrael."* I extracted a coin from my pocket and dropped it through the slot.

"Uh, uh," said the Chaplain laughingly, "a fellow-Zionist. Shall we let him in here with us Jews?"

"But Chaplain," I quickly replied, "when I was only eight days old, I. . . ."

"Enough," chortled the group, *"Dayenu."*

While the others were receiving addresses of the homes to which they were to be sent to spend the Passover, I dug my fingers into a pile of Jewish literature. How good to the heart was all of this. A magic carpet to a land of riches. . . . My turn came for appointment.

The Chaplain spoke to me:

"Whom do I know that could stand the buoyancy of a young Zionist? Ah! yes, who dares risk the peacefulness of his Seder with Zionist outpourings? Who is there? Some prominent Zionist I suppose."

"I'd be so grateful if . . . ," I quickly added.

"Yes," he went on, not paying attention to me, "you shall have your Pesah at my house."

"Your house?"—I retreated.

"Yes, son, my house, with my wife and my two children, who will surely enjoy a Palestinian symphony of thought and conversation."

That night, I wrote home my first joyous letter. That night I could hardly sleep. All of yesterday's gloom, loneliness of being lost, was dispelled. I was "going home" again.

A Scion of David

This was the "first Seder" night. Nervously, I prepared my clothes, and hurried aboard the outgoing bus. It being too early, I walked about the streets, humming to myself, *"Adir hu, adir hu"* and *"Had gadya, had gadya."* At last, I thought, it is time to go in. I rang the

bell. Once, twice, three times. The door opened.

"Won't you come in," a childish voice welcomed.

I entered the domain. A young boy about seven or eight years old lagged behind me. This was King David as a boy. He had coal-black curly hair, dark blue eyes, a short aquiline nose and a dark Arabian complexion. This was the dew on a Palestinian orange, the sun-swept hill of Scopus and the stuff of the dreamers and singers of Zion.

"Won't you sit down?" he invited.

"Yes, certainly."

"What would you like to do before my parents come home?" he asked.

"Oh. . . ."

"Would you like to see my rabbit? I call my rabbit Bar Kokhba, Judas Ha-Maccabee, Trumpeldor, David the Giant Killer, Samson the Strong, Alexander the Great," he boasted.

"That's a mighty long name, why not shorten it," I offered.

"Well, all right," he conceded, "I'll cut out Alexander the Great."

I laughed heartily. We reentered the household and sat down on the couch. I was face to face with a great array of Jewish literature. I selected a book of songs by I. Cooperman.

"Do you know any of these songs of Zion?", I asked.

"Yes."

He knew them all. His small voice sang through songs of the holidays, songs of prayers, songs of Palestine, songs of labor. . . . What a wonderful boy this was! We sang and talked and gradually we edged closer, *haver* to *haver,* in our exuberance and interest in singing and talking. He and I were one. Both of us had been kissed by the same father. *"Hinneh mah-tov umah na-im shevet ahim gam yahad."* How pleasant it is when brothers are together! I remember one wonderful remark he made:

"Some day, I too will fight, not with a gun, but with my knowledge. I will fight for our Jewish people, to give them back the glories of our Jewish tradition."

My World Again

Soon his parents came in.

"Shalom alekhem," I said.

"Alekhem alekhem," they answered.

That was a blessed night. The Chaplain graciously winged through the Haggadah. The Chaplain's wife magically produced an abundance of Jewish dishes and the Chaplain's children wrapped up all my joyousness with catching variations of the songs *"Ehad Mi Yodea"* and *"Ki Lo Naeh."* After the last full shout of "Next Year in Jerusalem!" we had to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, in order to leave the table. No sooner had we placed ourselves in comfortable talking positions, than David the younger son, aged four, said to his elder brother, "Daniel, play the Victrola."

Daniel complied. And he obtained an album of children's music, "Sing a Song of Sixpence," etc.

"No, no," screamed David, "I want to hear the Jewish records *"Anu Banu Artzah."*

The Chaplain smiled. We edged closer to conversation. Suddenly the door burst open. Shouting, singing, dancing, neighbors filled the house. Out came the wine and nuts, out came the *"lehaims,"* and after an allotted ten minutes, of assorted vocalizations, the caravan was on its way out, bearing in its entourage, the Chaplain's entire household. Off we went like school-children at a picnic, stopping here and there, dancing, singing, shouting *"Leshanah habaah,"* drinking, cracking nuts and bearing the riches of warm comradeship, living Jewishness, the glories of belonging, of a new, wonderful way of observing an ancient holiday.

This was my world again. I could nevermore fall into a mood of bottomless

despondency, and call the Lord's name in vain because I was separated from the world I knew. Now, I realized that wherever I should go, to whatever remote regions of the universe, there would always be a Jewish soul to take me by the hand. This was my *mitzvah*. Not long after, I received several short V-Mail letters from buddies in India, North Africa, England and Australia. The messages were similar:

"Happy Pesah. Our Chaplain with the aid of JWB groceries arranged a Seder for our regiment. There were the usual foodstuffs and ceremonies. But above all, we felt we were not forgotten, that the Jewish community in America had extended its great heart to us. We had, for a short time, a little bit of home here with us. And who now but feels that everything will turn out all right tomorrow?"

"So, my son, this is what I wanted to tell you."

Thus when my son one day takes his rightful place in Jewish-American affairs, I pray he will remember that the Community of Israel is forever our noble inheritance. I hope that he is brought up in a Jewish-American community that will have found its breastplate of holiness and strength. And that, whichever way fortune tosses him about, there will always be extended a word of *"Shalom alekhem."*

This must be so. *Selah!*

Vindication of Democracy—A Reply to Dr. Agus

By EUGENE KOHN

DR. AGUS'S critique of my article, "From Theocracy to Democracy," is presumably an attempt to reconcile these two opposing doctrines. He criticizes my insistence that, henceforth, in the interest of democracy, Jewry must discard the theocratic basis for authority in Jewish life. He does not deny the validity of the democratic ideal but he denies that its attainment demands the abandonment of theocracy and of the authoritarian attitude to tradition involved in theocracy.

His method of argument is to attack not so much the definite proposals that I make in my paper as what he conceives to be the philosophical premises on which they rest. Naturally, if those premises are proved false, my whole argument falls to the ground. If, however, the premises which he attacks are not at all the premises of my argument, as I shall presently prove, then his entire refutation fails.

Affirmation of Natural Law No Denial of God's Transcendence

Dr. Agus comments on my insistence that supernaturalism is incongruous with the truths revealed by science and is untenable by modern-minded people. This he construes to mean that I base religion solely on naturalism. "Should Judaism," he asks, "be reconstructed as a naturalist faith, in order to meet the demands of the formerly naive supernaturalist, now turned naive naturalist?," and answers, "It seems obvious to me that this demand is neither right nor wise."

Now the truth is that this seems equally obvious to me. Nothing I have said in my article can be legitimately interpreted as an assertion that naturalism can be the basis of religion. I did indeed contend that thinking Jews cannot in our day maintain the traditional supernaturalist version of the revelation of the Torah as the basis of its authority. This I do not retract. Nor do I retract the

affirmation that any theology for modern Jews must accept belief in the universality of natural law.

But to say that the laws of nature apply in every place and at all times is not the same as saying that these laws are all there is to reality, that there is no room in the cosmos for Spirit or God. It does not mean that man can dispense with faith in spiritual insights which, precisely because they deal with values and not merely with causes and effects, lie outside the province of science. Dr. Agus's logic is as fallacious as if he were to say that anybody who does not believe man to be a disembodied spirit, must believe him to be a mere physical automaton with no soul at all.

Had Dr. Agus taken the trouble, he could have found out from other articles of mine what are my true opinions on the subject of the transcendence of God. Let me quote as illustration a passage from the "Introduction to 'Sabbath Services for the Modern Synagogue'" (*The Reconstructionist,* Vol. X, No. 11) which was written by Dr. Kaplan and myself in collaboration:

"We believe in natural law. But natural law does not account for everything. We know, for example, that, as persons, we are more than bodies acting like mechanical robots. Although everything that we think, feel or do takes place through the instrumentality of our bodies and in conformity with physiological law, yet these do not explain to us what we are. They tell us nothing of what life means for us, of our yearnings, our desires, our hopes and fears, our loves and hates. So, too, the world about us cannot be wholly explained in terms of nature. There is a universal Spirit which transcends and uses nature in some such way as the human spirit transcends and uses the bodily organs of men. Science, which concerns itself with nature's laws, answers only the question: How? It does not answer the question: Why? It cannot tell us to what end or purpose we should direct our lives. The answer to that question, or rather the very question itself, implies a *Power both in and beyond nature* which moves men to seek value and meaning in life."

Denial of Traditional Theocracy No Denial of God's Sovereignty

In regard to the conflict between theocracy and democracy, Dr. Agus similarly confuses the issue by concealing my true premises and substituting others which he can easily refute. He begins by showing that theocracy need not necessarily be conceived "as a Divine constitution, handed down complete in every detail, from God to Moses to those who 'sit in his seat' until the present day." Thereby he gives the impression that I am unaware of any other possible way of conceiving theocracy. He then adds that "to seek to make the will of God triumphant in our lives and in society is obviously the minimum message of all religion." This statement would imply that my own position is a complete denial of the religious doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

Now compare this with what I have myself said in the article which Dr. Agus criticizes:

"Etymologically, theocracy means government by God or by divine law. *In that sense all good government would be theocratic, since all just laws honestly administered must be assumed to express the will of God.* But, *in the sense in which we use the term,* we mean by theocracy a government based on the assumption that the law by which it rules has been suspernaturally revealed and is immutable, and that the persons through whom authority is exercised are entitled to unquestioned obedience so long as they exercise their authority within the limits that divine law sets for them."

Evidently I too was aware of other possible definitions of theocracy than the

one here proposed. I did not propose it as stating the *only* sense in which theocracy can be conceived, but as stating the sense in which the term was to be used in our discussion of theocracy versus democracy. Nor was that meaning chosen arbitrarily out of all possible meanings of the term. It was chosen because it is precisely in this sense that theocracy is invoked by tradition as the basis for the authority of traditional law. It is, therefore, this particular conception of theocracy that stands in the way of the democratization of Jewish life. All other possible meanings are entirely irrelevant.

That my opposition to this particular conception of theocracy does not involve a denial of the sovereignty of God is implied in the very words Dr. Agus quotes from my paper. I repeat them here with a little more of their context:

"We need the sort of religion that recognizes the democratic process itself as the assertion of God's sovereignty. . . . In the democratic process man reaches the sublimest heights of freedom and responsibility, the most complete realization of the image of God in him. . . . To the extent that we achieve the maximum of freedom and cooperation attainable in our society, to that extent we 'perfect the world under the kingdom of the Almighty.' "

Democracy Not Mob Rule

Just as Dr. Agus misrepresents my attitude to theocracy, so he misrepresents my understanding of democracy. My definition of democracy is very clear, and, like my definition of theocracy must be understood in its context. It reads "By democracy we mean a government which derives its authority explicitly from the consent of the governed. Its authority is a delegated one, and it acts merely as the agent of the people in the exercise of its delegated authority."

If one reads that definition in connection with the previously quoted definition of theocracy, it is immediately apparent that they are both relevant to a specific problem, the problem of authority in Jewish life, of the social control of Jewish behavior. What sense is there then in raising the question, "are we willing to say, as some Reconstructionists imply, that the people are God and that the voice of the people is the voice of God?" And how is his answer relevant to the problem under discussion? . . . "Obviously such a position would negate all ethical standards and judgments. If any human voice comes nearest to echoing the voice of God, it is the 'still small voice' of conscience, not the rumble of the massed crowds?"

I do not know, since Dr. Agus does not inform us, who those "some Reconstructionists" are of whom he speaks. I presume, however, that he includes me among them. Dr. Agus thus implies that my conception of democracy equates it with mob-rule ("the rumble of the massed crowds") and with the notion that "the voice of the people is the voice of God." In doing so he completely—and, I am constrained to believe, deliberately—omits reference to my anticipatory refutation of just that charge. I stated clearly:

"The protagonists of theocracy oppose this apotheosis of the democratic process. In their opinion it is objectionable because it gives no 'absolute' ground on which to stand. It seems to equate 'the voice of the people' with the 'Voice of God,' as though 'the people' could not err. But that is not true, for the reason that democracy, like the Kingdom of God, is never at any particular time, fully realized. There always are conflicts of interest between individuals and between groups. But the ideal of democracy implies that the true interests of men coincide. These *true* interests in their *true* relations are the absolutes that give meaning and value to our relative ideals;

in their determination of human ideals; resides the sovereignty of God."

Not only does Dr. Agus ignore this disclaimer, but he also ignores my summary of the democratic principles which should guide Jewish community organiation. Those principles offer adequate safeguards against mob rule, against the violation of individual and minority rights by the majority. Let me recall them; they are *inclusiveness, voluntarism, constitutionalism* and *federation.*

Has Dr. Agus anything better to offer? Is the "still small voice" of conscience, which he contrasts with the rumble of the massed crowds, to be the sole source of authority in Jewish life? If so, one may well ask: Whose conscience? No doubt his answer would be "the best judgment of those best qualified to judge." To which we reply: Is there any better method than that of constitutional democracy for determining who are the persons best qualified to judge or for resolving the unavoidable conflicts of opinion between equally conscientious individuals? Granted that "the voice which comes nearest to echoing the voice of God . . . is the "still small voice" of conscience; but is it true that an authoritarian religious tradition, such as is implied in the theocratic conception of Jewish religious authority, gives free and unhampered sway to the individual conscience? It seems to me that Dr. Agus here involves himself in a dilemma which all his subtle reasoning cannot resolve. In determining how Jewish law shall operate in Jewish life, he can leave it either to the individual conscience or to the religious tradition, but he must choose between them. He cannot, for example, say that we should leave Sabbath observance to the individual conscience and, at the same time, affirm that we must maintain the authority of the codes which prescribe the manner of observing the Sabbath.

The only way in which this dilemma can be resolved is by the democratic process, which substitutes a collective for an individual conscience. That collective conscience may err, but it is more likely to allow a certain area of freedom of expression to the individual than government either by a personal dictator acting on his personal "conscience" alone, or by an authoritarian hierarchy acting by "divine right" and demanding obedience in God's name. We admit a *"hierarchy of values";* what we object to is an ecclesiastical *hierarchy of power,* basing its authority on the fiction that it is administering a code directly revealed by God.

The Crux of the Problem

This brings us to what Dr. Agus and I seem agreed in considering the crux of the entire problem. "The question at issue is whether the synagogue or the community shall be the basic unit of organization." Dr. Agus believes the synagogue should be. He is very vague on the question of how the synagogue is to exercise its hegemony, and just who shall constitute "the synagogue" of any local Jewry. The nearest he comes to defining the term is to say that "the term synagogue in this connection may stand for one synagogue, as in small communities, or for an association of synagogues." He does not state whether all the synagogues of any community would have to be included or whether some of them — the extreme Reform or the extreme Orthodox for example — might be excluded. He admits that there is "need for united action on the part of all organizations in the community in certain limited spheres," but he does not delimit those spheres. Nor does he state whether the community as a whole, or only "the synagogue" as the basic unit shall delimit them.

This vagueness is significant because it permits the author to criticize the operation of the proposed principle of "voluntarism" in the organization and function-

ing of the Jewish community without his assuming responsibility for offering any workable alternative to that principle. To make membership in the community organization the sole criterion for being considered a Jew, he claims, weakens the incentive to belong to and maintain religious institutions: synagogues, schools, seminaries, etc. Since membership in them would be optional under the principle of voluntarism, he contends that "every Jew will be encouraged to feel that he belongs to the Jewish nationality and that his primary allegiance belongs to the community as a whole."

Now let us disperse the fog of vagueness in Dr. Agus's thinking and pursue the various alternatives which are consistent with his viewpoint that the synagogue and not the community must be the basic unit. That proposition must mean, if it means anything, either that membership in a congregation be a prerequisite to membership in a community or that it be a prerequisite to the exercise of the suffrage in communal affairs. This, it seems to me, is a clear inference from his objection to my granting to the community the authority to "draft new legslation for the regulation of social relations affecting the entire community." Now, if membership in a congregation is a prerequsite to membership in the Jewish community, then many men of the caliber of the late Justice Louis D. Brandeis, or of Professor Albert Einstein, leaders in various fields of Jewish endeavor, would have to be excommunicated. If, on the other hand, membership in the community would be open to all who want to be Jews but membership in the "synagogue" be a prerequisite to the exercise of the suffrage, then one would have to assume tha a Brandeis is disqualified from having a voice in Jewish affairs, but that every *am ha-aretz* who belongs to a congregation is qualified. Or perhaps Dr. Agus would restrict the suffrage still further and open it only to rabbis, possibly only to rabbis of his own school of thought. He would have no difficulty in finding traditional precedent for that restriction. But if this is what he means, Dr. Agus will have to give up altogether the pretense that his theocratic view of authority is consistent with democracy, for he would definitely be advocating government without the consent of the governed.

Can this be what Dr. Agus really wants? In the insistence of all orthodoxies on an absolutist authoritarian tradition, and in their condemnation of all alternatives as mere "relativism," there lurks a dangerous rationalization. They seek absolute authority for a hierarchy, caste or profession on the pretense that they are spokesmen for an absolute revealed truth. I am not a relativist in the sense of denying the absolute distinction between true and false, right and wrong, good and evil. But I have enough religious humility to know that I do not possess an absolute knowledge of these ultimates and have enough self-respect not to surrender my confidence in my own thought-processses in favor of those of any persons living or dead who may claim possession of such absolute knowledge. Such a surrender is a shirking of moral responsibility for the personal pursuit of truth and righteousness and is of a piece with the abdication of political responsibility which creates dictatorship and the absolutism of totalitarian regimes. The exercise of all authority in society must be based on judgments of *relative* values, and the democratic process is, I maintain, the safest method for the distribution of authority and responsibility; insistence on "Divine right" as a title to authority is the most unsafe.

The True Role of the Synagogue in the Community

Though the foregoing disposes of the crucial problem of theocratic versus de-

mocratic authority in Jewish life, Dr. Agus's article suggests the need for clarifying somewhat the true role of the synagogue and its relation to the community in such a democratic set-up as I have advocated. Dr. Agus lays down the premise that the doctrine of Judaism as a religious civilization means that religion is "the soul and substance of Jewish life." That, to my mind, is an error. Religion is indeed the *soul* of Jewish life, but *not its substance.* The substance of Jewish life is the whole complex of interests that Jews have in common, the daily needs, yearnings and strivings which they experience as Jews. Jewish civilization is religious in that it views thees interests from the point of view of salvation, of their relation to the good and abundant life. Jewish religion endeavors to discover the laws on which the achievement of that life depends and to make Jewish life conform to them. This is equivalent to what Dr. Agus correctly says is the essential character of Jewish piety, the yearning to conform to the will of God.

The place of religion is, therefore, not limited to the synagogue. The Jewish home and the Jewish community must also bear testimony to the reality of God as the Power that makes for salvation. The function of the synagogue should be to give expression in Jewish worship to the need for communion with God and to interpret the religious tradition of Israel to the adult and the child. But the task of *applying* religious values to all aspects of Jewish life cannot be monopolized by the synagogue. Jewish religion must express itself in every phase of Jewish life—in the effort to attain security, in the building up of the home-land, in combating anti-Semitism, in fostering Jewish art and culture, in removing physical, cultural and economic handicaps to the personal self-fulfilment of Jews.

Dr. Agus is mistaken in assuming that the one thing which has led "some Reconstructionists to shift the center of gravity from the synagogue to the community is their concern for the welfare of the 'perplexed' Jews, the non-religious who find themselves pressed in the mold of a religious community." What has led me and others who believe with me into that shift of emphasis is the perception that *life itself* is bigger than the *interpretation of life.*

The synagogue has a sufficiently outstanding task to perform in interpreting the Jewish religious tradition through education and providing for the expression of religious thought and sentiment through ritual. This task entitles it to representation in the executive body of the organized Jewish community as we conceive it. It does not entitle the synagogue to the exercise of control or domination of the community's activities.

I am in wholehearted agreement with Dr. Agus when he says: "We must not allow the synagogue to be disassociated from the vital interests of Jews. Our aim must be to return to the synagogue the life-blood of Israel that has ebbed away from it." But one does not vitalize the synagogue by giving it tasks to do which it is not qualified by tradition or experience to discharge. No mistake would be more fatal, for example, than to ask the Synagogue Council of America to take over the work of the Zionist Organization, the American Jewish Conference, the National Council of Federations and Welfare Funds and the many other national Jewish organizations of specialized function. The same would be true of the local "synagogue" in relation to local Jewish community institutions and associations.

Moreover, the tendency to equate the synagogue with the community as a whole, like every equation, is equally valid if read from right to left or from left to right. To make membership in the synagogue a requirement for membership

in the community may well result in the secularization of the synagogue. This is no far-fetched conjecture. Very few congregations even today appeal for membership on the basis of their spiritual purposes, but rather on the basis of social and personal advantages to the members entirely irrelevant to religion. If, to be accounted a Jew in good standing, one had to become a member of a synagogue, this tendency to secularization would be augmented. For many Jews would then join congregations merely that they might be considered Jews, even though they were opposed to all for which the synagogue stands religiously. On the other hand, if membership in a Jewish community were sufficient to stamp a man as a Jew and to give him a share in Jewish life, the tendency to secularize the synagogue would be checked. For the synagogue could then insist on specific religious qualifications for admission to membership without feeling that it was thereby denying to any Jew fellowship with his people. The synagogue could then really become an association of Jews consecrated to advancing the fundamental religious aspect of Jewish civilization. Through its representation in the Jewish Community Council, it could then worthily speak for the religious outlook. For it would command respect as having a purpose and program to which its membership was sincerely devoted; it would have cleared itself of the reproach of being a "social club."

It follows, therefore, that, whether we regard the problem from the viewpoint of the best interests of the community as a whole or of the synagogue as an institution, the transfer of ultimate authority over Jewish life from the synagogue to the community is religiously desirable. It would not merely "return to the synagogue the life-blood of Israel that has ebbed away from it," but it would enable the synagogue to function as the heart of the community and keep that life-blood flowing through all its arteries and veins.

A Few Thoughts On Summer Camps

By SAMUEL GRAND

DESPITE the snow and the chilly blasts of March, this is the planning season for proprietors and administrators of children's summer camps. The reunions are already over; enrollment campaigns are well under way. Because of the manpower shortage and priorities, the major problems facing camp directors seem to be personnel, food, and equipment.

The Camp as Educational Agency

As though these problems were not headache enough, I propose to raise questions about programming and philosophy. During these revolutionary times it is necessary to subject every educational agency to careful scrutiny. Whatever summer camps started out to be, whether as resorts for the children of the very rich, or as fresh air reprieves for slum-shocked children, or as organized scouting encampments, they have become extremely important instruments of education.

For city children, especially those reared in the large metropolitan centers, summer camps open up a new world—a world of field and forest, of long hours of easy leisure away from the hustle and bustle of the walled-in cities. The camp setting affords an opportunity for rounding out the narrow curriculum of city

life and city education. The camp location provides intimate contact with the farm and the town, their folk and their ways of life.

Some Glaring Defects in Camp Programming

Do camps, Jewish camps in particular, take advantage of these educational opportunities? Let each judge according to his own experience. I shall judge from some fifteen summers of varied experience and observation. Comparisons are odious, generalities even more so. I shall engage in neither. A few camp directors grasp the full educational implications of the camp environment and make nature study the major activity. A good many realize what can be done, but find it easier and more profitable to cater to the desire of parents to give their children a "vacation." Some miss the boat altogether.

Let us be specific. All too many Jewish camps are country adaptations of Boro Park (no aspersions intended). Indoor basketball courts, baseball diamonds, ice cream parlors and movies are the favorite hangouts. Nature work is largely a matter of collecting specimens on "nature walks." Neighbors are "country hicks," who must be crazy to stay there all year "round." Camp fires are occasions for further gorging and nonsensical mock-Indian ritual.

Learning from Special Types of Camps

Jewish camp directors would do well to take a leaf from the best of the *Hakhshara* farms, scout camps, Quaker work camps, youth hostels, and the C.C.C. To be sure, the program of these groups is geared to adolescents or young adults; nevertheless, they contain many features that are applicable to the average summer camp for children. The common denominator of all these youth programs is *work*—physical work, performed, in most cases, in cooperative fashion.

From the Zionist *Hakhsharah* farms, camp directors can borrow the practice of utilizing farming as a basic activity. City children, especially Jewish children, should take part in as many phases of "putting in and taking out a crop" as possible. Moreover, the farm yield should be used as part of the regular menu, not as museum pieces for doting parents.

Scout camps can point to foot-bridges, roads, cabins, lean-tos, and many other construction jobs performed by youngsters under the direction of scout masters or general counsellors. Contrast these accomplishments with the crafts program of Jewish summer camps which produce leather belts, lanyards, and similar souvenirs. At best, most Jewish summer camps are limited to the art craft patterns of the classroom or the community center.

Soil conservation and reforestation were the basic projects of the C.C.C. and will, no doubt, be given increasingly greater attention after the war. Scenes of soil erosion and forest depletion or neglect are within easy reach of most summer camps and should become sites of interest and activity. Camp directors, who seek to give their program a practical Zionist flavor, would do well to have their campers "take to the woods," cut out dead timber and plant seedlings. Such a program would add zest and meaning to nature trips.

Hostelling gives young people a first-hand knowledge of and a feeling for the country. The closest approximation to this in summer camps is "trip week", which is limited to the "better" camps. To be sure, all extended trips, overnight hikes and the like, involve risk and responsibility. So do swimming and baseball; but these are customary risks and are readily accepted. Once convinced that adequate precautions will be taken,

parents can easily be persuaded to give permission for hikes and trips.

Camp people would profit from a study of Quaker work camps in action. Here, the concept of service to the community is all-important. Equally significant is the wholehearted cooperation that work-campers achieve among the people in the vicinity of the camp. This is one element of public relations in which Jewish summer camps have not been particularly successful. Unless neighboring farmers or towns-folk have business dealings with the camp, they rarely visit it. Very few campers and counsellors get to know any of the neighbors with the possible exception of the proprietors of roadside stands, ice cream parlors and the movies. Many of our city-bred youngsters spend summer after summer at the same camp and never get to know the history of the region in which the camp is located. They never learn—never take the slightest interest in—the people near camp, how they make their living (if they do) or what their homes look like on the inside. Nor do they know, if they care at all, what these neighbors think of them. Some of us have heard these permanent residents of the neighborhood voice their opinions on occasion, and they are not very favorable, to say the least.

Reducing the Lag Between Potentialities and Achievements

What to do about all this? Let each camp director take stock of the program that he has been conducting in the light of his own philosophy of camping and in the light of the considerations discussed above. Let parents realize what a rich experience a summer camp can provide for their children. So many are amazed by the fact that their children have learned to make their beds and to eat certain foods without a grimace. That is only the *Aleph Bet* of camping.

The lag between the potentialities and the achievements of summer camps should be gradually and systematically reduced. With the cooperation of mature counsellors who are at home in the country, and with a greater dedication to the pioneering spirit, the camp program can be revitalized. For the increasing numbers of children who go to camp, it can become the most important element of their year-round education.

CORRESPONDENCE

On the Democracy of the Federations and Welfare Funds

Sirs:

Thank you for sending me a marked copy of your issue of February 9th, and calling to my attention your editorial on "The Crucial Problem of Communal Democracy." We appreciate the interest of your publication in this issue but I presume you have seen our statements and bulletins which indicate that no definite action has been taken on this subject and it is still a matter for study and exploration. It is on that basis that I wish to comment on your editorial.

You apparently accept the need for a national advisory budgeting service but believe that the Council and the welfare funds as now constituted are not the proper instruments because they are not constituted in a democratic fashion to represent all American Jews. Such a belief must arise from a misunderstanding of the nature of the Council and its member agencies. The governing body of the Council is the General Assembly consisting of delegates chosen by the member organizations. All of our member agencies are organized on a democratic basis either by individual membership participation or through representation of all local Jewish groups or with a combination of such methods of participation. There is, of course, no perfect community or form of organization but there is a real desire on the part of all concerned to manage their communal affairs on as representative a basis as possible since they all seek to draw in all elements of the Jewish community into a common effort.

For your information it may be of interest that at least 75 of the member agencies of our

Council are organized as community councils on a group membership with or without additional individual participation. Not all of them are certain that this form of organization is superior to the one which is based upon direct individual participation rather than through secondary means of selection through group organization. The experience which is developing on Jewish community organization may be more important than any *a priori* concept or theory on this subject.

H. L. LURIE,
Executive Director, Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds

---

Sirs,

I read with great interest your editorial in the February 9th issue of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, and I am glad to note that you realize the need for national budgeting. I regret to note, however, that you do not believe that the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds is the proper body to project national budgeting on the alleged ground that it is not democratically constituted.

I am somewhat at a loss to understand how you reached your conclusion.

Whether or not there should be national budgeting does not seem to me to be a matter which should be decided by a show of hands. It is basically a matter of principle. Only after the principle has been decided will the budgeteers be selected. Here it seems to me that it is not a question of democracy but a question of objective judgment, and until the Council gives us evidence of its lack of objectivity, I think it should be trusted with the budgeting responsibility.

W. S. HILBORN, Los Angeles, Calif.

On Jewish Art

Sirs,

On reading your thought-provoking article, "The Arts in American Jewish Life," (THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, Volume XI, No. 1) I have considered the idea of a basic Jewish art and have come to the following conclusions.

By looking back at the significant examples of Jewish art through the ages I have found that one of the earliest of these was a beautiful synagogue of definitely Greek influence, then there were some strange catacombs executed in decidedly Roman style. In the sixteenth century a building identified with Dutch Jews, was their great synagogue in Amsterdam, a wonderful edifice but clearly a Dutch one. By these examples I hope that you will see the very thin, much influenced thread that is Jewish art. The Bible could not change but the tastes of its followers could and did, frequently.

Jewish art is intangible. It is an individual expression of a man who by birth was a Jew. An attempt to convert this man's taste into a Jewish art would be, in my opinion, wrong. This applies to the present even more than to the past. There are very many talented Jewish painters and sculptors it is true, but to combine their various artistic expressions into one school under the heading of Jewish Art would be impossible.

I believe that the Jewish art of the past would be an exceedingly weak foundation for a new art movement, and that the work of contemporary Jewish artists is far too diverse in style and thought to present a unified picture.

If you wish, however, by the title of Jewish Art, to mean a new art culture, translating the language of the Bible into a clear cut architecture and design, I would find it worthwhile. But it would still only represent a conception and expression that belongs exclusively to our time.

COLIN EISLER, New York, N. Y.

On the Opportunities of "Jewish Middletown"

Sirs:

I would like to express my wholehearted agreement with what was said by Mordecai Brill in "Wanted — a Study of Jewish Middletown." Ten years in a community of about 200 families lead me to agree with every detail of his analysis. Might I add to his words the fact that the Jewish Middletown offers a magnificent opportunity to the rabbi to be of personal service to his congregation. The spiritual leadership of the rabbi is more real than normal in such a community and the emergence of a new American expression of our Judaic tradition may be loked for in just such areas.

And a word of gratitude to *The Reconstructionist* for ten years of splendid leadership.

JEROME R. MALINO,
Rabbi, United Jewish Center, Danbury, Conn.

AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS

SAMUEL GRAND was formerly the Executive Secretary of the American Association for Jewish Education and is now the Educational Director of the Civilian Public Service unit in Middletown, Connecticut.

BERTRAM A. ROSENBERG is prominent in Masada, Youth Zionist organization of America, and is now chairman of its Committee on Men in the Armed Forces.